a. providing a sample suspected of containing an antibody against HIV,

b. contacting said sample with at least one antigen mixture selected from the group consisting of a mixture of an antigen [derived] from the epitope region II, amino acids 518-533, of the Consensus sequence of an HIV1-subtype D isolate or a variant thereof and an antigen [derived] from the [corresponding] epitope II region of gp41 of a different HIV1 subtype of the M group and a mixture of an antigen [of] from epitope region I, amino acids 551-565, of the Consensus sequence of an HIV1-subtype E isolate or a variant thereof and an antigen derived from the [corresponding] epitope region I of gp41 of a different HIV1 subtype of the M group, characterized in that an antigen in said mixture is bound to a label which generates a detectable signal when said antigen is bound to said antibody, and

c. [measuring the binding of said antigen mixture to said HIV antibody] detecting the signal generated as a measure of said HIV antibody in the sample.

17. (amended) The method of claim [15] 16 wherein said antigen [of gp41] of an HIV1-subtype D isolate corresponds to a sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs. 1 to 11 [and partial sequences thereof].

19. (amended) An antigen mixture comprising an antigen from the epitope region II, amino acids 518-533, of the consensus sequence [of gp41] of an HIV1-subtype D isolate or a variant thereof and an antigen [derived] from the epitope II region of gp41 of a different HIV1 subtype of the group M.

23. (amended) The antigen mixture of claim 19 wherein said antigen [of gp41] of an HIV1-subtype D isolate corresponds to a sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs. 1 to 11 [and partial sequences thereof].

25. (amended) The antigen mixture of claim 19, further comprising an antigen [derived] from epitope region I or II of HIV1-subtype O.

29. (amended) An immunoassay method for detection of an antibody against HIV comprising:

a. providing a sample suspected of containing an antibody against HIV,

b. contacting said sample with an antigen comprising a sequence selected from the group consisting of SEQ ID NOs. 1 to 11 [and partial sequences thereof], said sequence having a minimum length of 7 amino acids, characterized in that said antigen is bound to a label which generates a detectable signal when the antigen is bound to said antibody, and

c. [measuring the binding of said antigen to said HIV antibody] detecting the signal generated as a measure of said HIV antibody in the sample.

30. (amended) A reagent for the detection of an antibody against HIV by means of an immunoassay comprising an antigen mixture comprising an isolated antigen from the epitope region II, amino acids 518-533, of the consensus sequence [of gp41] of an HIV1-subtype D isolate ~~or a variant thereof~~ and an isolated antigen [derived] from the epitope II region of gp41 of a different HIV1 subtype of the group M.

REMARKS

In view of the preceding amendments and the comments which follow, and pursuant to 37 CFR §1.111, amendment and reconsideration of the Official Action of March 28, 2001 is respectfully requested by Applicants.